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NEWSLETTER

Climate Change and healthy AgeinG:
co-creating E-learning for resilience and adaptation

chAnGE Project: From warnings to workable actions

The **chAnGE project** (**c**limate change and **h**ealthy **A**gei**nG**: co-creating **E-learning** for resilience and adaptation), is focused on strengthening knowledge and capacity around the impacts of climate change on health, particularly for older adults, and, crucially, on translating that knowledge into practical, real-world action. Through a series of micro-credentials (MCs), the project brings together scientific evidence, professional experience, and applied learning to support more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable healthcare and social systems.

Within this learning framework, **MC11** and **MC12** feature interviews with leading experts from healthcare, research, and policy. These interviews offer grounded, experience-based insights into how climate change is already affecting health systems and what can be done in practice to respond.

A consistent message emerges: **climate adaptation is not theoretical, it is operational, urgent, and also feasible.** From planning for heat extreme health effects, to infrastructure resilience, to workforce training and community engagement, the experts highlight both the scale of the challenge and the availability of concrete solutions.

The following sections bring together the key insights from these interviews, focusing on what climate adaptation looks like in real-world settings, and how these ideas can be translated into action.

Don't miss the chance to download the practical chAnGE resources: Resources – chAnGE

Heat adaptation is where climate action can save lives now

Climate change is fundamentally a **public health challenge**, with disproportionate impacts on older adults and people living with chronic conditions. Its effects are already shaping health outcomes, healthcare demand, and system pressures today, particularly for older adults.

Heatwaves are consistently identified as one of the most dangerous and preventable climate-related health risks. Experts emphasise that **heat-health action plans** are a clear example of adaptation measures that directly saves lives, especially when designed around the needs, vulnerabilities, and everyday realities of older people.

Concrete actions for heat adaptation include:

- establishing **early warning systems** and real-time monitoring
- identifying and proactively reaching **vulnerable individuals** (e.g., older adults living alone or with chronic conditions)
- ensuring access to **cool environments**, including designated cooling rooms or community shelters
- supporting **hydration routines** and adapting meals (lighter, more frequent, safely stored)
- adjusting care routines, staffing plans, and support networks during extreme heat events

Solutions like **climate shelters** and **guaranteed access to green spaces** in all neighbourhoods are highlighted as low-cost, high-impact strategies that not only reduce mortality but also address social isolation.

In practice: effective adaptation is built on preparation, coordination, and simple, well-designed interventions that are already known to work and can be activated quickly.

Climate adaptation is the practical work of staying safe, keeping services running, and reducing avoidable harm, with vulnerable populations at the centre of health system preparedness.

Resilient services require resilient infrastructure and continuity planning

As climate risks intensify, health systems must adapt, not only to protect patients, but to remain operational under pressure. This translates into priorities such as:

- upgrading **infrastructure** to withstand heatwaves, floods, storms, and power disruptions
- implementing **backup systems** (e.g., power, water, IT) to maintain critical operations
- integrating **telemedicine and remote monitoring** to maintain care when access is disrupted
- strengthening **supply chains** to prevent shortages of medicines, equipment, and essential resources
- developing and regularly testing **emergency preparedness and response plans**
- improving **coordination across services** (hospital, primary care, community care) during crises
- embedding **sustainable practices** (energy efficiency, resource optimisation, reduced emissions) into care delivery
- using **data and surveillance systems** to anticipate demand and guide decision-making

In practice: resilience involves backup plans and building upgrades, but it also requires clear roles, supply chain awareness, and operational readiness so essential services remain available when demand spikes.

Investing in people is essential to effective climate adaptation

Beyond infrastructure and planning, experts consistently emphasise that **people are at the centre of climate adaptation**. Well-prepared and connected individuals - both within communities and the healthcare workforce - are what make systems truly resilient. This includes:

- providing tailored **emergency preparedness training** using simple language, visual tools, and community-based approaches
- establishing **regular check-ins** and support networks for older adults, particularly those living alone
- involving older people as **active contributors** in adaptation planning, valuing their experience and local knowledge
- mobilising **community and informal support systems** (family, neighbours, volunteers) during extreme events
- equipping healthcare professionals with the **skills and tools to adapt care practices**, including new routines and decision-making approaches
- promoting **workforce-driven innovation**, enabling teams to improve care delivery through practical, coordinated solutions

In practice: resilient systems depend on empowered people, supported through training, inclusion, collaboration, and equipped to continuously improve how care is delivered.

MC15: Climate Adaptation in Practice, 5 or 15 ECTS

MC15 is a new module designed to turn climate adaptation knowledge into **practical action in real-world settings**. As a practice-oriented capstone module, it **enables learners to develop and implement projects in their own workplace**, focusing on climate adaptation, quality improvement, or innovation.

Through a structured **"Create → Test → Improve" approach**, ideas are refined through real application, for example, piloting a heatwave checklist, testing a staff training session, or adapting patient materials based on feedback. With flexible pathways (5 or 15 ECTS), MC15 provides a clear and accessible route from learning to implementation.

Call to action: climate adaptation is already happening. MC15 offers the opportunity to be part of that process - to turn insights into real solutions and contribute to more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable health and care systems.

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